MARVEL

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PERCY CAMPANA JUNIOR VALENZA

GHOST-RIDER

When innocent blood is spilled, a ***Spirit of Vengeance*** is born, and **JOHNNY BLAZE** finds himself transformed!

Marvel Comics *presents*...

GHOST RIDER

"Night Rider"

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PREVIOUSLY...

Over the years, numerous mortals have played host to the Spirits of Vengeance, including Johnny Blaze, Danny Ketch and Robbie Reyes...transforming them into the being known as the Ghost Rider! All three have struggled to use their hellish power for good, but there are other spirits who walk the night...

THREE YEARS AGO.
EAST L.A. ROBBIE REYES.

THE STORY BEGINS THE SAME.

IT'S NIGHT.

MAYBE IT'S RAINING HARD.

TWO YEARS AGO.
BROOKLYN. DANNY KETCH.

MAYBE WE'RE TIRED. OR BUZZING.

MAYBE IT'S THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE.

AND WE THINK, "AH, WHAT THE HELL."

NOW.
MAINE. JOHNNY BLAZE.

IT'S AGAINST OUR BETTER JUDGMENT.

BUT WE DO IT ANYWAY.

BECAUSE THE RIDERS ARE SUPPOSED TO HELP THE PEOPLE WHO NEED IT, YEAH?

"WHERE YOU HEADED?" WE ASK.

"NOT TOO FAR," HE SAYS.

"JUST DOWN THE ROAD."

I'M ROBBIE. GET IN.

NAME'S DANNY. AND HOLD ON TIGHT.

I APPRECIATE YOU...?

JOHNNY.

THERE'S SOMETHING OFF ABOUT HIS VOICE.

IT SOUNDS LIKE HE'S SPEAKING FROM THE BOTTOM OF A WELL.

WE ASK WHAT HIS NAME IS...

...BUT HE DOESN'T RESPOND.

AND THAT'S OKAY.

WE GET IT.

BECAUSE WE ALL HAVE SOMETHING TO HIDE.

MIND IF I PUT ON SOME MUSIC, MAN?

WHEN THE DIAL TURNS, THERE IS NO THROBBING BASS OR CATCHY CHORUS.

CHK

CCHHHREEEE

HIS GRIP IS TIGHT...

...AND SEARCHING.

HEY. WHEN I SAID HOLD ON TIGHT...

...I DIDN'T MEAN *THAT* TIGHT.

DANNY'S BODY IS NO LONGER HIS OWN.

IT INSTEAD FEELS LIKE AN ENGINE THAT'S BEING TAKEN APART...

...AND PUT BACK TOGETHER.

THE HEATER MUST HAVE DIED.

THE AIR IS COLD ENOUGH TO SHATTER LUNGS.

BREATH STEAMS, MAKING THE AIR SEEM FULL OF GHOSTS.

THE ROAD AHEAD IS A BLINDING-WHITE NOWHERE.

THERE'S NO SENSE OF UP OR DOWN... LEFT OR RIGHT.

AND TALIA, TOO, IS LOST--GONE IN HER OWN DARK DREAMS.

A SMELL COMES OFF THE HITCHHIKER'S BAG.

IT'S DAMP AND STICKY TO THE TOUCH.

WE CAN'T *NOT* OPEN IT...

...BUT WE WISH WE HADN'T.

EARLIER...

...YOU ASKED WHAT MY NAME WAS.

TURNS OUT, I HAVE *MANY.*

INCLUDING YOURS!

IT'S MORE THAN OUR FACE HE TAKES.

IT'S OUR *SPIRIT.*

WE FEEL A LOSS OF CONTROL...

...AS IF WE'VE BEEN HOT-WIRED.

NOW THE HITCHHIKER IS THE RIDER BEHIND THE ENGINE...

...AND WE'RE THE PASSENGER BEING DRAGGED ALONG.

IT WAS CLEAR HE WANTED MORE THAN A JOYRIDE.

HE HAD A DESTINATION IN MIND.

HE NEEDED US FOR TRANSPORTATION.

AND HE NEEDED US AS A WEAPON.

THERE WERE OTHERS LIKE HIM THERE.

BUT NOT FOR LONG.

THEY ARE KNOWN AS THE *CHURCH OF THE FLAYED.*

THEY CAN CLOTHE THEMSELVES IN ANY APPEARANCE...

...AND ANY POWER.

HE WANTS TO BE THE ONLY ONE.

AND WE'RE HELPING HIM GET HIS WAY.

THEY WORSHIP AN OLD GOD.

ITS PLACE OF POWER--A TEMPLE OF SKINS--IS LOCATED DEEP IN THE WOODS.

THE HITCHHIKER DIDN'T COME HERE TO MAKE AN OFFERING.

HE CAME TO TAKE.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU STEAL THE SKIN OF A GOD?

BUT HERE'S THE THING ABOUT US: ROBBIE AND DANNY AND JOHNNY.

WE LET OUR GUARD DOWN BECAUSE WE WANTED TO HELP.

THAT'S OUR DAILY STRUGGLE. WE WANT TO HELP...

...BUT WE SPECIALIZE IN HURT.

THE HURT WE'VE ENDURED.

AND THE HURT WE INFLICT.

WE DON'T NEED HELLFIRE OR CHAINS OR A PENANCE STARE TO FIGHT.

AND WE'RE NOT GOING TO STAND BY AS PASSENGERS...

...IN SOMEONE ELSE'S BLOOD QUEST.

EVEN IF WE'RE RUNNING ON FUMES...

...EVEN IF IT KILLS US...

...WE'RE GOING DOWN SWINGING.

BUT SOMETHING UNEXPECTED HAPPENS.

THE HITCHHIKER HAS ACCOMPLISHED HIS TASK...

...DESTROYING HIS OWN PEOPLE, DESTROYING HIS OWN GOD...

...BECOMING THE ONE AND ONLY OF HIS KIND...

...SO HE GIVES US BACK THE KEYS.

HE GIVES US BACK OUR FACES.

WE FEEL RAW AND BRUISED, GRATEFUL AND PISSED.

BUT MAYBE THERE'S ANOTHER PART OF US THAT RESPECTS HIM.

BECAUSE HE'S TAKEN CONTROL OF HIS DESTINY IN A WAY THAT WE HAVEN'T.

SOMETIMES IT FEELS LIKE *WE'RE* THE HITCHHIKERS, RELYING ON THE POWER AND GUIDANCE OF THE RIDER.

WE'RE KIND OF AWED BY THIS BOLD CLAIM ON POWER.

AND NOT FOR THE FIRST TIME, WE WONDER WHO WE ARE AND HOW WE CAN BETTER NAVIGATE OUR OWN ROADS.

WE'VE GOT A FEELING WE'LL BE RUNNING INTO HIM AGAIN SOMEWHERE DOWN THE ROAD.

WE ONLY HOPE, WHEN THE TIME COMES, WE'LL RECOGNIZE HIM.

F.B.I. HEADQUARTERS. WASHINGTON, DC.

I'M AFRAID THE *INFERNAL LABS* FACILITY AND MOST OF ITS EQUIPMENT WERE DESTROYED.

SO AS MUCH AS I APPRECIATE YOUR INTEREST, I DON'T HAVE MUCH TO OFFER YOU BEYOND DATA FILES, MR.--

IT'S ACTUALLY FATHER...

...FATHER PIKE.

I HAVE BEEN APPROACHED BY *ORCHIS*, AND I, IN TURN, APPROACH YOU.

ORCHIS DRAWS ITS RANKS FROM THE F.B.I. AND THE C.I.A., AMONG OTHERS. YOU ARE OBLIGATED TO THEIR MISSION TO PROTECT HUMANS FROM THE MUTANTS.

MANY IN MY COMMUNITY HAVE BEEN OBSERVING, WITH GREAT INTEREST, THE WORK OF INFERNAL LABS.

THE WEAPONIZATION OF THE BIOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGY OF HELL IS A LONG TIME COMING.

WHAT EXACTLY IS IT THAT ORCHIS IS PROPOSING? BECAUSE MY FUNDING KEEPS GETTING CUT TO THE BONE.

THIS WON'T COST YOU ANYTHING EXCEPT SPONSORSHIP, TAX SHELTER AND ABSOLUTE IMMUNITY.

A NEW *WEAPONS PLUS* PROGRAM.

PROJECT HELLFIRE.

ORCHIS WILL READY THE PAPERWORK, BUT IN THE MEANTIME, HOW ABOUT WE SHAKE ON IT...

...IN A GESTURE OF *GOOD FAITH.*

WHAT-- *NNNGH!*

SSSSs

--WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME?

I BLESSED YOU AND YOUR GOVERNMENT.

I DO LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING TOGETHER.

NEXT: GHOST RIDER! WOLVERINE! WEAPONS OF VENGEANCE!

NEXT ISSUE

A demonic serial killer is murdering innocent mutants. But what is it about this deadly new villain that forces Wolverine and Ghost Rider to team up? And what buried secret does he share with the heroes' never-before-seen very first meeting in the past? Come back next month for the first part of our epic crossover!

GHOST RIDER/WOLVERINE: WEAPONS OF VENGEANCE ALPHA

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